

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 02401 131919Z

11

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-07 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

CIEP-02 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07

INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 USIA-15

SAM-01 OES-05 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 SIL-01 LAB-04

PA-02 PRS-01 /114 W

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R 131910Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9023

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

UNCLAS LONDON 02401

E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UI

SUBJECT: FLARE-UP IN THE COAL INDUSTRY

SUMMARY - A FLARE-UP IN THE COAL INDUSTRY HAS RESULTED
FROM A DECISION BY THE NATIONAL COAL BOARD TO CLOSE DOWN
AN UNPRODUCTIVE MINE IN DERBYSHIRE. THE NUM EXECUTIVE BY
A NARROW VOTE OF 11 TO 10 DECIDED IN FAVOR OF AN OVERTIME
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PAGE 02 LONDON 02401 131919Z

BAN, BEGINNING NONDAY, FEBRUARY 16. UNLESS THE NCB RES-

CINDS ITS DECISION. END SUMMARY

1. JOE GORMLEY, THE NUM PRESIDENT, SAID HE WAS "BROWNE
OFF AND DISGUSTED" OVER THE VOTE. HE CALLED IT A "FIASCO"
AND INDICATED THAT MICK MCGAHEY, THE COMMUNIST VICE-PRE-
SIDENT, WAS ALSO AGAINST THE BAN EVEN THOUGH THE LATTER
MERELY ABSTAINED DURING THE VOTE. THE ISSUE HAS BEEN
SIMMERING FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AS A RESULT OF THE NCB'S DE-
CISION TO CLOSE AN UNPRODUCTIVE PIT AT LANGWITH. DERBY-
SHIRE. THE WORKERS AT LANGWITH ARE INSISTING THAT THE
NCB OPEN UP A NEW SEAM IN THE AREA, BUT THE BOARD MAIN-
TAINS THAT THIS WOULD BE DANGEROUS AND UNECONOMIC. (900
JOBS ARE EXPECTED TO BE PHASED OUT AT THE COLLIERY, BUT
THE WORKERS APE TO BE TRANSFERRED TO NEARBY PITS.)

2. GORMLEY HAS EXPLAINED THAT THE PRECIPITOUS ACTION BY
THE NUM TO BAN OVERTIME MAY BE DUE TO A FEAR ON THE PART
OF SEVERAL LEADERS THAT THE CLOSURE AT LANGWITH IS IN-
TENDED AS THE BEGINNING OF A SERIES OF CLOSURES SIMILAR
TO THOSE WHICH OCCURRED DURING THE 1960'S. THE REACTION
IN OTHER MINING AREAS TO THE CALL FOR AN OVERTIME BAN IS
RATHER VARIED, HOWEVER. AND SOME MINERS ALREADY ARE PRO-
TESTING THE NUM DECISION. COAL STOCKS ARE HIGHER NOW
THAN THEY HAVE BEEN FOR SEVERAL YEARS, WITH 29.5 MILLION
TONS STOCKED AT THIS POINT IN CONTRAST TO 21 MILLION TONS
AT THE SAME TIME LAST YEAR.

3. COMMENT: WHILE THE MOOD OF THE MINERS IS RATHER
LESS MILITANT THAN IT WAS DURING RECENT MAJOR STRIKES IN
THE COAL INDUSTRY, VOTE UNDERSCORES AGAIN HOW VOLATILE
THE MINERS' UNION IS. (THIS FLARE-UP HAS OCCURRED IN THE
WAKE OF A DECISION VERY RECENTLY BY THE NUM TO ACCEPT THE
6 POUND WAGE SETTLEMENT.) THE OVERTIME BAN MAY BE SEEN
SIMPLY AS AN ABERRATION AND, HOPEFULLY, WILL BE RESOLVED
SOON, BUT IT DOES SERVE AS A WARNING TO OBSERVERS HERE
TO BE CAUTIOUS IN PREDICTING TRADE UNION BEHAVIOR. (THIS
IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN ASSESSING THE VITAL QUESTION
OF HOW TUC UNIONS WILL HANDLE THE NEXT AND VERY CRUCIAL
WAGE ROUND.)

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PAGE 03 LONDON 02401 131919Z

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TAGS: ELAB, EMIN, UK, NATIONAL COAL BOARD
To: STATE
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